**In 1998 Asia** (including South Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific region) **accounted for about two-thirds of the world’s 1.2 billion poorest people.** These people all lived on less than $1 per day. South Asia—that is, the Indian subcontinent, which includes India, Nepal, and Bangladesh—had about **522 million people living in extreme poverty in 1996.** **India had the greatest number of poor of any country in the world—more than 300 million people**, more than one-third of its population. The [caste](http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761565041/Caste_(social).html) system associated with Hinduism, the dominant religion in India, helps perpetuate some of this poverty. This system keeps many families poor from generation to generation by assigning certain groups of people to low status.

Approximately 267 million people in East and Southeast Asia lived on less than $1 per day in 1998. China has very large numbers of poor due to the great size of its rural population. Such Southeast Asian countries as Vietnam, the Philippines, and Indonesia also rank among the world’s poorest.

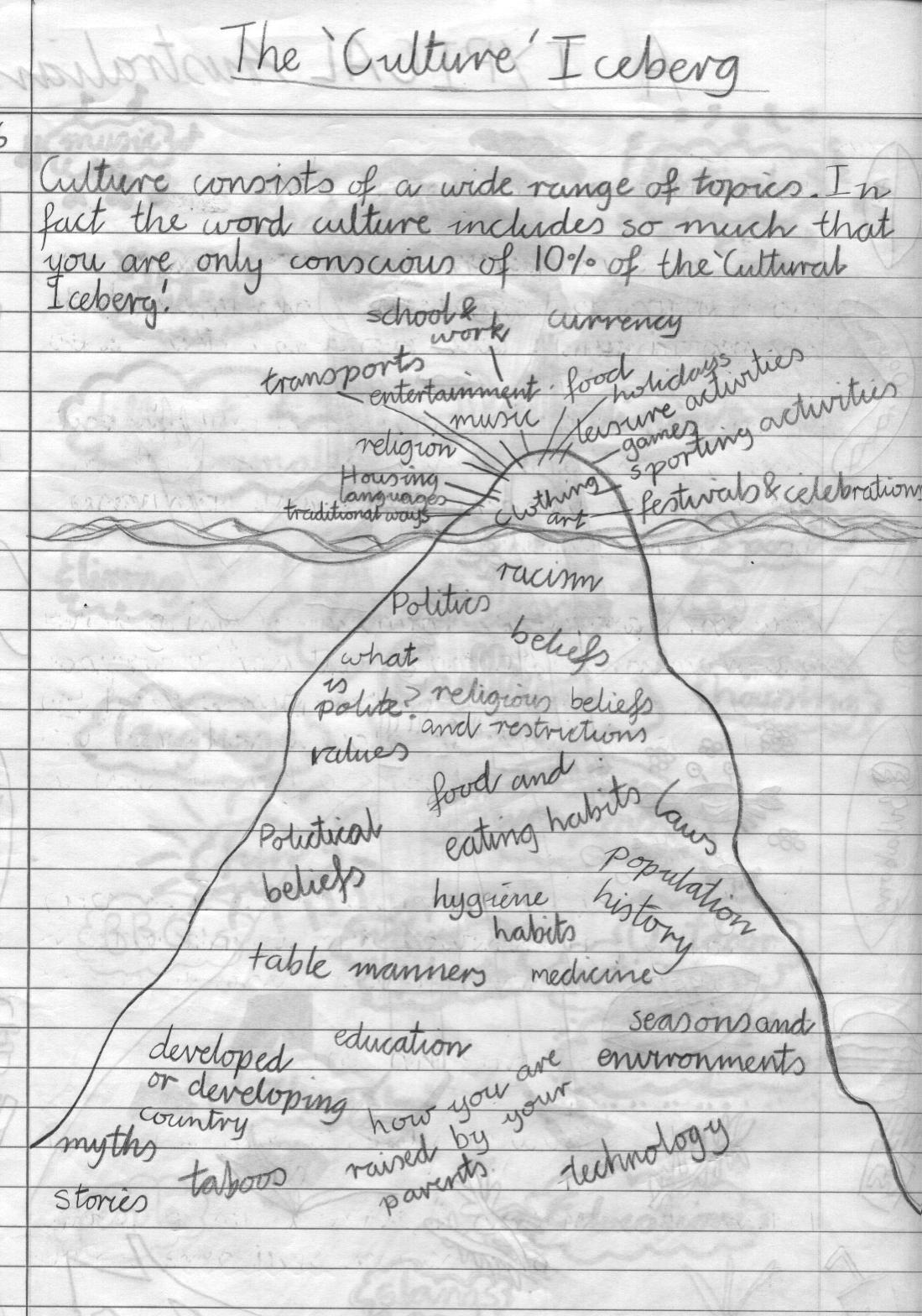
**Several wars have contributed to poverty in South and East Asia.** World War II (1939-1945) and the wars in Korea (1950-1953) and Vietnam (1959-1975) damaged land, crops, and forests; prevented many people from making a living; and killed and dislocated millions. In the late 20th century, governments and industries around these regions sponsored massive deforestation, mining, and damming projects that damaged or hindered access to forests, fields, and water resources. Such projects also forced many people to abandon their homes and fields, making them more susceptible to poverty.

http://www.fightpoverty.mmbrico.com/images/e05.gif**Nearly half of Asian kids live in poverty**

**Nearly half of Asia’s 1.27 billion children live in poverty** — deprived of food, safe drinking water, health or shelter, a development agency said in a report.  
  
While 600 million children under the age of 18 lack access to one of these basic human needs, **more than 350 million are deprived of two or more of these needs**, said **Growing up in Asia**, a report from the child humanitarian organization Plan.  
  
Plan said half of Asia’s families are not benefiting from economic growth and globalization. It blamed the pressure of rapid population growth on scarce resources; lack of access to education, healthcare, clean water and sanitation; caste discrimination; and weak governance and corruption.

http://www.fightpoverty.mmbrico.com/images/e05.gif**Poverty keeping children out of school**

Widespread **poverty and ignorance are forcing more than half the number of children** of Danuwar community at Bhimtar village in Sindhupalchok **out of schools.** They can instead be found wasting their time fishing.  
  
Although there is a lower secondary school at Bhimtar, more than half the number of children in the village are without any education, **Krishna Prasad Shrestha**, headmaster of Bhimeshwor Lower Secondary School, said.   
  
**“Only fifty percent of all children in this village have been admitted to the school. The enrolled students too attend the school according to their will.”** Shrestha said.   
  
**Most of the children in Bhimtar were busy fishing and playing other games rather than studying**, the guardians of the students said. **“Children who earn by selling fish do not like to go to school,”** local guardians said.   
  
There are around **248 school age boys and 193 girls** in the village. Among them, only 46 boys and 15 girls have been admitted in the school. Even among them, **many students quit schooling early.**  
  
**Source:** South Asian Media

**Sources:**  
<http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761577020_4/Poverty.html>   
<http://southasia.oneworld.net/section/southasia/partners>   
<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/3036014/>